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The Beginnings of English Literature. By CHARLTON M. LEWIS. Boston : Ginn & Co.

THIS book has a very useful chronological table and an opening chapter on the making of the race which sums up briefly the constituent elements of the English people. The arrangement of the table of Teutonic languages in the second chapter might be better, for there is no reason why a geographical plan should not be followed, nor does the "common German" subdivision appeal to us. Indeed, the whole table loses in clearness by its brevity. As for the remaining chapters of the book, they do not seem to us to equal the clear presentation of the same facts which is to be found in Stopford Brooke's revised form of his capital *Primer of English Literature*.

What Is Shakespeare ? An Introduction to the Great Plays. By L. A. SHERMAN. New York : The Macmillan Co., 1902.

OF the making of introductions to the great master there is literally no end. And what is the student to do with all this *embarras de richesse*? There is too great a temptation for him to read books about the author rather than to study the author himself. A good biography such as Sidney Lee's, a primer such as Dowden's, the plays themselves, and a sympathetic instructor will produce better results for the majority of learners than elaborate introductions which emphasize this or that quality of the author. "Psychological processes," "moral purposes," "potencies," and "verities" are too often overdone. This can only befog rather than enlighten the student and make him wonder at his own stupidity because he does not see all these remarkable excellences.

Professor Sherman's book is somewhat akin to Moulton's *Shakespeare as a Dramatic Artist*. It gives a very full analysis of *Cymbeline*, also a somewhat briefer treatment of *The Winter's Tale*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Macbeth*. In the first he makes a very elaborate study of Imogen; indeed, throughout the work he has a strong sympathy for the women characters of the different plays. He is also strong in the emphasis of the moral element, far too much so to be an entirely safe guide. Chap. vi, "Shakespeare the Man," goes over familiar ground. But what is the student to make out of this statement regarding *Venus and Adonis*? "The Venus is not only an interpretation, with considerable Renaissance freedom, of the goddess consciousness on its human side, toward a Galahad ideal of the Greek mind : it is no less a study of that ideal itself." We miss our guess if he will not be completely stunned. In the chapter entitled "Groupings of the Plays" Professor Sherman divides them into *incident plays*, *personal plays*, and *moral plays*. It seems to us that this system is just as bad as most of the others which have been propounded from time to time, for they are all unsatisfactory. Chap. viii, on the "Personal Study of the Plays," is a short bibliography of "Helps," some of them of doubtful value. The list, of course, makes no pretension to completeness. The Appendix contains outline questions on "*The Winter's Tale*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Twelfth Night*." These are capital, close, and suggestive, making perhaps the most useful part of the book. Such a series on the more commonly read tragedies and comedies would be well received by teachers and students, as they furnish all the elements of the "laboratory" method that can be applied with advantage. The book is suggestive throughout, even if we may not agree at all times with the author.

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